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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9297  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE 2722  
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN 9052  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES 2863  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 002235

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OSD FOR SECRETARY GATES, DASD FATA AND RELLEHUUS;  
NSC FOR HADLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/21/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [IT](#)  
SUBJECT: ITALY: SCENESETTER FOR SECDEF'S OCT. 30 MEETING  
WITH ITALIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE PARISI: GLOBAL HAWK,  
DARFUR HELOS, AFGHANISTAN, KOSOVO

REF: A. STATE 146521  
[1](#)B. STATE 147667  
[1](#)C. ROME 2153

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald P. Spogli, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C/NF) Ambassador met DefMin Parisi October 22 to preview agenda items likely to come up in Parisi's October 30 meeting with SecDef Gates. Parisi said he hoped to have a firm answer on Global Hawk by Oct. 30. He said categorically that Italy cannot contribute helicopters to the Darfur mission due to over-stretched helo commitments elsewhere. On Afghanistan, Parisi affirmed that Italy was committed for the long-term and could sustain its deployment at current levels, but could not make or sustain a larger commitment. He worried that after December 10, Kosovo could experience crises in which foreign troops become "reference points" for dissatisfaction, and noted that European publics were not prepared for this. He said European governments had not done enough for Serbia in the run up to Dec. 10 and that a Marshall Plan-type arrangement was needed for Kosovo. Parisi appreciated Ambassador's readout of the Moscow 2 2 talks (Ref A). Parisi declared that Italy had managed to maintain and advance its commitments to NATO and its friendship toward the U.S. despite a fragile government with a powerful far-left component. End Summary.

Global Hawk  
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[1](#)2. (C/NF) The Ambassador called on Minister of Defense Arturo Parisi October 22, to preview agenda items likely to come up in Parisi's Oct. 30 meeting with Secretary of Defense Gates, pointing out that Parisi's visit to Washington would be the first of three high-level Italian visits in the coming months (the others being President Napolitano and FM D'Alema's in December and PM Prodi's in February) and would set the tone for the others. When the Ambassador asked Parisi if Italy was ready to approve U.S. basing of Global Hawk UAVs at Sigonella, Parisi said that convergence of Italian, NATO and US interests in having the asset in Italy would be important.

The Ambassador explained that SecDef would be expecting an answer on Oct. 30, and that we understood the matter was ready for decision on the Italian side. Parisi said he would try to have a decision ready for his Washington visit. (Note: After the meeting, Parisi's Diplomatic Advisor, Achille Amerio, told the Ambassador he thought, but could not guarantee, that we would get approval for Global Hawk on Oct. 30.)

#### No Helos for Darfur

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¶3. (C/NF) The Ambassador pressed Parisi to consider contributing helicopter assets to the Darfur mission per Ref ¶B. Parisi replied Italy had no such assets to give. The Ambassador noted that MFA sources had told us Italy was considering contributing two CH-47s and/or three HH-3F's (Ref C). Parisi said he was unaware of any such possibility, noting that this was not a question of political will or budget, but simply that Italy's rotary assets were stretched too thin and no additional helicopters were available.

#### Afghanistan - Italy Committed Long-Term, Only at Current Level

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¶4. (C/NF) Parisi said that Italy had confirmed its commitment in Afghanistan, and pointed out that he has said publicly that Italian forces would be there until at least 2011. Parisi cited the coming plus-up of Italian troops and the additional assets (UAVs, helicopters and force protection equipment) as evidence of Italy's commitment to doing a solid job in ISAF. He said Italy was doing what it could with a

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difficult domestic political situation and in a region of Afghanistan that was getting more dangerous. Parisi asserted that Italy could sustain its the deployment at current levels for the coming years, but would be unable to contribute or sustain more.

#### Kosovo - Needs a Marshall Plan, Attention to Serbia

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¶5. (C/NF) The Ambassador stressed the importance of EU unity on Kosovo, especially if, as expected, negotiations fail to produce a solution by Dec. 10. Parisi said he had recently met the Slovenian DefMin who was less pessimistic. Parisi thought Kosovo needed something akin to the Marshall Plan, as its economy was awful and likely to get worse. He worried that if things go poorly there, foreign troops could become "a reference point" for public unhappiness, a situation for which European publics were not prepared. Italy was very limited in what it could do at this point. He opined that the EU should have offered more support to Serbia earlier: now there would be a rush to offer the Serbs carrots, but they would be too little, too late.

#### Missile Defense, Sheppard AFB Trip, Italy a Good Ally

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¶6. (C/NF) The Ambassador gave Parisi Ref A readout of the mid-October 2 2 talks in Moscow. Parisi commented, "So they didn't go so badly as the press said..." He noted the importance of his visit to Sheppard AFB, immediately after his meeting with SecDef Oct. 30. Traveling there with Italian press was, Parisi said, a chance to show Italians that they had troops based in the U.S. too, not just the other way around.

¶7. (C/NF) Parisi emphasizing that Italy had remained a good Ally and friend of the U.S. despite the difficult Italian government coalition in which a single extreme leftist senator could bring the government down. He said that "we have no differences on the fundamentals" and showed the Ambassador a graph of Italian defense spending with a

significant upward trend over the past two years. Parisi called the GOI's ability to resolve satisfactorily almost all of our defense-related issues and those of the Alliance "a miracle" of which he was clearly proud.

18. (C/NF) Comment: That Parisi feels he is working miracles in maintaining NATO commitments and keeping alive the 50-year-old defense relationship with the U.S. speaks volumes. Parisi remains a nearly full-time domestic politician, better versed in the vicissitudes of Italian political maneuvering than in the issues in his defense portfolio, of which he has, in our experience, a somewhat superficial understanding. However, Italian senior officials do not like to come to Washington empty-handed, so the Oct. 30 meeting with Secretary Gates is a superb opportunity to close on some key issues in play.  
End comment.

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